

# Chapter 1

## Our Oakley Family History

Our Oakley ancestors emigrated from England in 1651. They eventually settled in the Borough Town of Westchester, New York – a town that originally was within Westchester County, northeast of Manhattan (or New Amsterdam, as it was named in those days). Actually, this location isn't all that far from the western end of Long Island Sound. In 1898, this land became part of The Bronx County. Of course, back in the mid-1600's, this land was quite rural.

Since other branches of the Oakley family settled elsewhere in the Colonies, our ancestors comprised the “Westchester Branch” of the Oakley family. A book describing this branch of the family was published in 1962 – it was entitled “Oakley Genealogy: The Westchester Branch”. This book was written by Philip Field Horne (member, New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Westchester County Historical Society, and Children of the American Revolution). Philip Field Horne was born in 1951, making him a VERY young person at the time he wrote this book. In fact, I met him completely by accident in 1960 in the library of the Westchester Historical Society in Elmsford, New York, when I was there with my father, who was researching our Oakley family roots. Philip had a folder under his arm labeled “Oakley Family Genealogy”, so I struck up a conversation with him. Little did I know that fifty-five years later, I would be referring to his book to learn more about our Oakley family roots in Westchester County, New York.

The names of various members of the Westchester Branch of the Oakley family appear prominently in the 1848 book entitled “History of the County of Westchester from its First Settlement to the Present Time”, by Robert Bolton, Jr. This book is available online at:

<https://archive.org/details/historyofcountyo01bolt>

Even though we can trace our Oakley roots to the “Westchester Branch” of the family, at some point in the mid-1700's, Jeremiah Oakley moved to Fairfield County, Connecticut, where his Oakley descendants lived for the next one hundred years or so. Fairfield County was the home of the Burr family – and Jeremiah Oakley married Sarah Burr.

More about the Oakleys (descendants of Jeremiah Oakley and his wife Sarah Burr Oakley) in Fairfield County, Connecticut, can be found in the book “History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield”, compiled and edited by Donald Lines Jacobus, for the Eunice Dennie Burr Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Fairfield, Connecticut, published in 1930. This book is available online at:

<https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/43068?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

OK, with all this as preamble, let’s get on with our Oakley ancestors.

## **FIRST GENERATION**

John Oakley was born before 1630 in England. He emigrated from England in 1651. Due to similar coats-of-arms, John probably was the son of William of Shropshire. If so, he also had a brother and grandfather named William. John was probably a widower when he emigrated, and he later married Mary Van Nuyse of Staten Island in 1662. He died in 1682.

The name Oakley is derived from a lea of oaks. The first man to bear this name lived in England supposedly about the time of William the Conqueror (1066 AD) and owned a lea of oaks. It was for this reason that he chose the name Oak-lea. [lea – a grasslands or pasture. Middle English *leye*, from Old English *lēah*; akin to Old High German *lōh* thicket, Latin *lucus* grove, *lux* light.]

As an aside, one of the Oakley family trees on the Ancestry.com website traces John Oakley back to Eleanor of Aquitaine (in the 1100’s) and before that to someone born in 990 AD. I take this part of our genealogy with a grain of salt. But it is at:

<http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/55869514/family?cfpid=38001897007>

if you want to take a look.

John had two sons: Miles Oakley (our ancestor) and Thomas Oakley. Thomas Oakley was born about 1645 in England. He emigrated from England with his family in 1651, and since he eventually settled on Long Island, New York, his descendants formed the “Long Island Branch” of the Oakley family.

The year 1651 was a time of trouble in England. King Charles I was executed at Whitehall on 30 January 1649, at the climax of the English Civil War. Although the Parliament of Scotland proclaimed Charles II king on 5 February 1649, England entered the period known as the English Commonwealth, and the country was a de facto republic, led by Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell defeated Charles II at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651, and Charles fled to mainland Europe. Cromwell became virtual dictator of England, Scotland and Ireland, and Charles spent the next nine years in exile in France, the Dutch Republic, and the Spanish Netherlands. I find it noteworthy that John Oakley and his sons emigrated from England in 1651, in the midst of all this conflict.

## **SECOND GENERATION**

Miles Oakley was born on 15 July 1645 in Oakley Grove, Parish of Oakley, England. Miles Oakley immigrated to Boston, Massachusetts, with his father and brother Thomas in 1651. Miles Oakley married Mary Wilmot, daughter of John Wilmot and Bridget Waters, in 1669 at Great Neck, Long Island, New York. He settled in the Borough Town of Westchester, in an area that is now part of The Bronx, New York. In fact, his farm was part of the present-day Westchester Square neighborhood of the Bronx. He served as the first Mayor of the Borough Town of Westchester, which was incorporated in 1675.

The village of Westchester had been founded in about 1654 by English settlers, on land purchased by Thomas Pell from Native Americans, although his right to do so was disputed by the Dutch, who also laid claim to the land.

Miles Oakley died on May 16, 1682, in the Borough Town of Westchester, New York, at age 36. He was buried on 17 May 1682, in St. Peter's Episcopal Churchyard, the Borough Town of Westchester, New York. The inscription on his gravestone reads "Beneath this Stone Lie the Remains of Miles Oakley, born in Oakley Grove, in the Parish of Oakley, England, Fifteenth of July 1645, Died in the Borough Town of Westchester, May 1682."

Letters of administration [a legal document entrusting an individual with the *administration* of the estate of a deceased person] were granted to his widow Mary on 13 Nov 1682.

Miles Oakley and his wife Mary Wilmot Oakley had the following children:

1. Edward Oakley

2. Miles Oakley – our ancestor. I'll refer to him as Miles Oakley Jr.
3. Bridget Oakley
4. John Oakley
5. Thomas Oakley

### **THIRD GENERATION**

Miles Oakley Jr. was born on 24 December 1671 in Westchester, New York. He died in 1743. Miles Oakley Jr. was a man of considerable importance in the Borough Town of Westchester. He was known to be a member of the Common Council in 1696, a vestryman of St. Peter's Church in 1709, an Alderman in 1719, President of the Board of the Town Trustees in 1720, and Mayor from 1730-32.

He was married to Mercy Gardner in 1694 in New York. After her death, he married Elizabeth, who was the daughter of John Barlow (another important founding family in the Borough Town of Westchester) and the widow of Jerimiah [Jeremiah?] Fowler.

Miles Oakley Jr. and his wife Mercy Gardner Oakley had the following children:

1. Miles Oakley – our ancestor. I'll refer to him as Miles Oakley III.
2. Mercy Oakley
3. Mary Oakley
4. Jonathan Oakley
5. William Oakley
6. Abigail Oakley
7. Jemima Oakley

### **FOURTH GENERATION**

Miles Oakley III was born in 1696. He died in 1763 in Westchester, New York. He resided in Westchester, New York. Miles Oakley III married Sarah Tippetts, and they had the following children:

1. Miles Oakley – this must be Miles Oakley IV
2. Caleb Oakley
3. David Oakley
4. Isaac Oakley
5. Joseph Oakley

6. William Oakley
7. Jeremiah Oakley – this is our ancestor
8. Gilbert Oakley
9. Jane Oakley
10. Martha Patty Oakley

## **FIFTH GENERATION**

Before I go on to our ancestor Jeremiah Oakley, let me digress and share an interesting item about Jeremiah's oldest brother, Miles Oakley IV. Miles Oakley IV was a patriot and served in the Continental Army - he was commissioned a second lieutenant in Col. James Holmes's 4th New York Regiment on 28 June 1775. He owned a tavern (really an inn, with overnight accommodations) in the town of White Plains, New York (in the present-day Westchester County). On 5 November 1776, a group of "American troops" set fire to his tavern and it burned to the ground. On 9 November 1776, Miles Oakley IV sent a petition to Gen. George Washington, asking for compensation for his loss. At that time, George Washington was the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. This petition can be found in *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 7, 21 October 1776–5 January 1777*, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997, pp. 127–128. It is available online at:

<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0090>

The text of this petition follows:

### **Petition from Miles Oakley**

Novr 9th 1776

The petition of Miles Oakley Humbly Sheweth That by his Labour and Industry he had procured himself a small peice of Land at the white plains Contiguous to the Court House that on it within the Last four or five years he built him a Comfortable and Convenient House and Barn. That he Kept an Inn for the Entertainment of Travellers which Enabled him to maintain his family which Consists of a Wife and four Small Children, That on the Approach of the Enemy, he Removed his wife (who Lay in but six days before) with his Children to the north of the Lines formed by the troops under your Excellencys Command—That on his Return to bring off Some of his furniture and most Valuable Effects he found his house Robbed and

pillaged his Desk Split to peices and his money Books and papers taken and Carried Away by our own Troops—by which means he is left without a Second Bed and Scarce a Change of Cloaths for himself—his wife or Children. this your petitioner bore with Resignation—not Doubting but if he should again gett into his house he Should by his Industry in time Retrieve his Losses—But so it is may it please your Excellency that on Tuesday Night last your petitioners House and Barn was by some of the American Troops Burnt to the Ground and your petitioner and his family Left without any means whatever of Obtaining a Subsistance, That your petitioners Losses do not Amount together to Less than Seven hundred pounds Currency.

your petitioner begs Leave to Observe to your Excellency that he has Ever been a friend to his Country that he Served as a Lieutenant in the late Northern Expedition under the Command of Generals Schuyler and Montgomery. your petitioner Therefore begs your Excellency will be favourably pleased to take his meloncholy case into consideration and give him such Relief in the premisses as to you in your Great wisdom shall seem Just and Reasonable your petitioner farther begs if your Excellency should be of Opinion that the Granting your petitioner Relief is not properly within your Department that your Excellency will be pleased to Enquire into the truth of the facts herein sett forth and give your petitioner Such Certificates and Recommendations Either to the Honorable the Continentall or provincial Congress as you shall think your petitioners hard Case truly Deserves. and your petitioner Shall Ever pray.

Miles Oakley

Pretty cool to have correspondence from one of our great-uncles to Gen. George Washington in 1776!!

Now, going back to our ancestor, Jeremiah Oakley. Jeremiah Oakley was born about 1730 in Westchester, New York. He married Sarah Burr in 1753, so he must have moved to Connecticut as a young man. He appeared on the census in 1790 in New Fairfield Town, Fairfield County, Connecticut. He appeared on the census in 1810 in Weston, Fairfield County, Connecticut. He died on 11 May 1820 in Easton, Fairfield County, Connecticut. His estate was probated on 10 June 1821 in Easton, Connecticut. Jeremiah's gravestone lists his age as 90 years 3 months.

Sarah Burr Oakley died on 29 August 1807. Jeremiah re-married a woman named Jane after Sarah's death in 1807 – at a time when he was about 77 years old. Jane was born in about 1744 and she died 13 July 1828 at age 84.

Jeremiah's first wife, Sarah Burr, was the daughter of Peter Burr and the granddaughter of Daniel Burr. Sarah Burr also was the first cousin of Aaron Burr Jr., the third Vice President of the United States.

Jeremiah Oakley and his wife Sarah Burr Oakley had the following children:

1. Burr Oakley – this is our ancestor
2. Peter Oakley
3. Susan Oakley
4. Abigail Oakley
5. Gilbert Oakley
6. Jeremiah Oakley, Jr.
7. David Oakley

All seven of their children were mentioned in Jeremiah's will, which appears in "History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield", compiled and edited by Donald Lines Jacobus, Volume 2, p. 704-5, published in 1930.

## **SIXTH GENERATION**

Jeremiah Oakley and Sarah Burr Oakley named their first son Burr Oakley (it apparently was somewhat of a tradition for the Burr daughters in Connecticut to give their first-born sons the first name of Burr).

Burr Oakley was born between 1750 and 1760. Burr Oakley Sr. was christened between 1750 and 1760 in Greenfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut. [Greenfield Hill is an affluent historic neighborhood of Fairfield.] There are records of his land purchases from 1798, 1799, 1803, and 1804, showing that he owned parcels of land in Weston, Fairfield County, Connecticut. One of the records is of a mortgage from his father, Jeremiah Oakley.

Burr Oakley married Ruth, who was born around 1765. They had the following children:

1. Burr Oakley Jr.
2. William Burr Oakley

3. Amzi Oakley – our ancestor
4. another son, probably named Aaron
5. another daughter

It appears that Burr Oakley Sr. was the black sheep in the family. In the 1800 US Census, Burr Oakley Sr. was no longer living with his family. The census for Weston, Fairfield County, Connecticut, lists his wife Ruth, living with their son Burr Jr. and three children under sixteen years of age.

Again, in the 1810 US Census, Ruth was living with Burr Oakley Jr. and his siblings in Newtown, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

However, Burr Oakley Sr. reappeared in the 1820 US Census, living in the town of Southeast, Putnam County, New York. Southeast is just twenty-four miles from Redding, Connecticut, and less than thirty miles from Weston, Connecticut.

Burr Oakley Sr. was still living in 1821, because (as mentioned above) he was listed in his father's will per the "Old Fairfield" book (Volume 2, page 704). Since there is little or no other information about Burr mentioned in the "Old Fairfield" book, it appears that indeed he was the Black Sheep of the family.

Ruth Oakley appeared on the census in 1820 in Newtown, Connecticut. She appeared on the census in 1830 in Brookfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

## **SEVENTH GENERATION**

Amzi Oakley was born about 1799 in Redding, Fairfield County, Connecticut. He appeared on the census in 1800 in Weston, Fairfield County, Connecticut, with his father, Burr Oakley, being the head of the household. He appeared on the census in 1810 and 1820 in Newtown, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Amzi Oakley married Lucy Ann Eunice Darling on 6 January 1824 in Stratford, Fairfield County, Connecticut. She was born on 20 October 1804 in Easton, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Amzi and Lucy had the following children:

1. William Burr Oakley (born 1825)
2. Sarah Maria Oakley (born 1827)
3. Edwin Curtis Oakley (born 1830)



4. Mary Elizabeth Oakley (born 1833)
5. Aaron Burr Oakley (born 1835) – our ancestor
6. Ann Oakley (born 1838)
7. Martha Louisa Oakley (born 1844)

The family was living in Redding, Connecticut, in 1840. The 1840 US Census listed 1 male age 40-49 (Amzi), 1 female age 30-39 (Lucy), 1 male age 5-9 (Aaron Burr Oakley), 2 males age 10-14 (William Burr Oakley and Edwin Curtis Oakley), 1 female under age 5 (Ann Oakley), 1 female age 5-9 (Mary Elizabeth Oakley).

The family still was in Redding, Connecticut, for the 1850 US Census. Household members included Amzi (age 51), Lucy (age 45), Aaron Burr Oakley (age 14), Ann Oakley (age 12), and Martha Oakley (age 5). Amzi's occupation was listed as Cooper [a maker or repairer of casks and barrels].

Amzi Oakley died at age 54 of Typhoid Fever on 7 (or 12) October 1853 in Redding, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Sometime around 1960, my parents and I went to Redding, Connecticut, and found Amzi's gravestone in the Isaac Hamilton Cemetery. It was broken in half, and my father hired someone to repair it. It can be viewed at:

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=16312244>

After Amzi died, his widow Lucy Oakley lived with her younger daughters. Her son Aaron Burr Oakley had moved west and lived with his wife Hannah Mariah Miller Oakley in Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa. Well, Aaron's sister, Martha, also moved to Mechanicsville. In the 1870 US Census, Lucy Oakley (age 65) was living with her daughter, Martha (age 25), and Martha's husband H.O. Mitchel (age 28). In the 1880 US Census, Lucy Oakley (age 75) appeared in Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa, living with daughter Ann and Ann's husband M.L. Banks. I note that Lowden, Iowa, is 18 miles east of Mechanicsville, Iowa, on US 30. Ray Miller Oakley was born in Mechanicsville in 1876, so my guess is that Grandmother Lucy Oakley saw her little grandson Ray Oakley somewhere in Cedar County, Iowa.

Lucy Oakley died on 10 August 1884 in Bethel, Fairfield County, Connecticut. According to her death certificate, she was age 79 years, 9 months, 21 days old; widowed; husband's name Amzi Oakley; birthplace Easton, Connecticut; maiden name Lucy Darling.

## **EIGHTH GENERATION**

Aaron Burr Oakley was born on 8 August 1835, in Redding, Fairfield County, Connecticut. Sometime in the mid-1850's, he moved west to Illinois. He originally went to school (perhaps to study law) in Mt. Morris, Illinois.

Aaron Burr Oakley married Hannah Mariah Miller on 6 April 1858 in Beloit, Wisconsin (just north of Rockford, Illinois).

Aaron and Hannah appear in the 1860 US Census living in Taylor Township, Ogle County, Illinois (south of Rockford, Illinois). At the time, they were living in the household of one of Hannah's sisters, along with one of Hannah's brothers.

In the spring of 1861, Aaron and Hannah moved to Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa. Aaron was a school teacher, a school principal, the superintendent of schools for Cedar County, and an attorney. The 1870 US Census lists him as a drugstore clerk (was that a joke?). At various times, he was the Recorder, the Assessor, and a Trustee of the town of Mechanicsville. In the spring of 1877, Aaron moved to Alamosa, Iowa (~20 miles north of Mechanicsville) and practiced law with the firm of Oakley and Jamison.

Aaron was a Mason, and for a number of years was Secretary of Patmos Masonic Lodge #155 in Mechanicsville, Iowa.

In the 1880 US Census, Aaron and Hannah were living in Rockford, Illinois, with their four-year-old son, Ray Miller Oakley. Aaron's profession was listed as "Editor" – presumably with the Rockford Register newspaper (owned in part by his brother-in-law, Charles L. Miller).

From 1885 until 1891, Aaron and Hannah, along with their son Ray, homesteaded on 160 acres of land in Chadron, Nebraska (in the far northwest corner of the panhandle of Nebraska – near South Dakota and Wyoming). This land was the south-east quarter of Section 23 in Township 33 north of Range 49 west of the sixth principal meridian, several miles southwest of Chadron. [More about this in Chapter 12.]

In 1891, the family moved to Quincy, Illinois, where Hannah's brother Charles L. Miller, and several of Hannah's cousins, had just purchased the *Quincy Daily Herald*.

Aaron Burr Oakley and his wife Hannah Mariah Miller Oakley had the following children:

1. Charles William Oakley – born 13 January 1866, died 27 January 1866; Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa
2. Ray Miller Oakley – born 2 April 1876, Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa

Aaron Burr Oakley was the first generation of Oakleys to work at the *Quincy Herald*. He died in Quincy, Illinois, on 22 April 1906. His wife, Hannah, died in Quincy, Illinois, on 19 July 1926.

Aaron and Hannah are buried in Cedar Bluff Cemetery in Rockford, Illinois, in the Miller plot (along with Hannah's mother Jane Kershaw Wells Miller and Hannah's brother Charles L. Miller).

## **NINTH GENERATION**

Ray Miller Oakley. Ray was born on 2 April 1876 in Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa. Even though Mechanicsville is in eastern Iowa, it actually is just *EAST* of Quincy, Illinois. Ray moved to Quincy, Illinois, in 1891 to work for the *Quincy Herald*. He died on 12 May 1948 and is buried in Woodland Cemetery in Quincy, Illinois.

Ray married Kate Cameron Burks on 7 April 1897 in Quincy, Illinois. She was born on 23 October 1873 in Burlington, Iowa. She died in Quincy, Illinois, on 19 January 1954 and is buried in Woodland Cemetery in Quincy, Illinois.

Ray Miller Oakley and his wife Kate Cameron Burks Oakley had the following children:

1. Burks Oakley (born 4 June 1898)
2. Elisabeth Oakley (born 15 December 1900)
3. William Burr Oakley (born 15 August 1903)
4. Allen Miller Oakley (born 4 October 1907)
5. Thomas Crawford Oakley (born 11 October 1909)

Carrying on the Oakley/Burr family tradition, Ray M. Oakley and Kate Burks Oakley named their first-born son Burks Oakley.

## **TENTH GENERATION**

Burks Oakley, Elisabeth Oakley, William Burr Oakley, Allen Miller Oakley,  
Thomas Crawford Oakley

## **ELEVENTH GENERATION**

Burks II, T.A., Tony, David, Susan Burks, Ann, Mary Cameron, and William Henry  
“Huck”.

## **TWELVETH GENERATION**

Hal, Peter, Tommy, Ralph, Mary, Dave, Mike, Tim, Susie, Cathy, Mark, David,  
Andrew, Christina, Amy, etc.

## **THIRTEENTH GENERATION**

Ben, Abigail, Allen, Allison, Sullivan, Tom, Ben, Jonathan, Katie, Meghan, Anna  
Ray, Laura, David, Josh, Cassie, Allie, Jake, Clayton, Cameron, Carlee, Oakley,  
Brittany, Sadie, Danny, Retta, David, Mary, Renae, Kacy Lynne, etc.

## **FOURTEENTH GENERATION**

Olivia, Sterling, Cameron, William Daniel, Ann Elizabeth, Harper, Hannah, Paul,  
Charlie, etc.